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Poems

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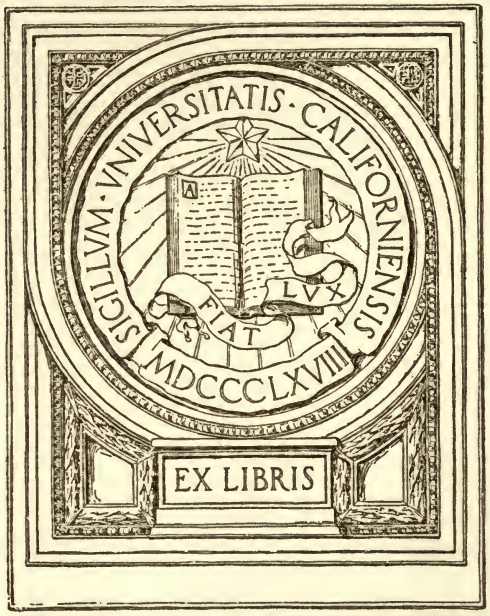

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Best Christmas wishes to
Fraulein Held, from her loving
little friend Ruby. Dec. 25, 1913.

A Christmas Hymn

and Other Poems

By

Ruby Boardman

The Art Bindery
Berkeley. 1913

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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To My Mother

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Quia natus est vobis hodie Salvator,
qui est Christus Dominus . . . .

Christmas Hymn

Some long two thousand years ago,
Upon the first bless'd Christmas morn.
Our Infant Saviour Christ was born,
Unto this world of sin and woe.

God gave His only Son, that we
Might learn through His divinest love
To lift our hearts to Him above,
And learn of Him humility.

And yet it is so long since then,
So long since Jesus lived and taught,
Have years effaced the good He wrought
And all the life He gave to men?

No, for on every Christmas morn
We feel that God is with us still;
That He renews His watch and will,
And that each year our Lord is born.

That He will keep you safe, I pray,
Within His arms the coming year,
And guard your heart from pain and fear,
And guide you toward eternal day.

A Thought

Now God forbid, that when I am full grown.
And have a name and fame my very own,
That I should scorn or scoff my youthful days,
Or feel ashamed of former rustic ways.

Nay, rather should I proudly thank and bless
The roads which led me to my happiness.
For is the day not fairer for its dawn,
And brighter, that the night has come and gone?

Sleep

When night in the great beauty of its dark,
Creeps in about the world and wraps all things
Within the mantle of its mystery;
Somnus arises shadowless from earth,
Approaches us, and, with his quiet touch,
Sets free our spirits from their mortal bonds.

Then like a bird loosed from captivity,
The liberated soul soars joyfully
To lands of poppy-blown chaotic bliss;
Where Reason's government 's a thing unknown;
And where the spirit wanders at its will,
Along the banks of clearest crystal streams;
Or lingers in a garden glowing white
With lilies; whose soft incense leads the thoughts
Astray through tangles of pure fantasy.

Ah, we are glad, poor mortals bound to earth,
With chains of hardest wrought reality,
To leave our bondage with the driving world,
And fly upon the wings of sleep to peace.
Finding the life upon the spheres and stars
(Or what e'er be the worlds we wander in)
A happy balance to the day's return.

MARCH 30, 1913.

A Dream

I know not how I came there, yet I stood
(One evening as the dying day's fresh blood,
Stained all the west a lurid glowing red,)
Upon the rampart of a castle wall.

Far down below me roared an angry sea,
Which met and beat upon the castle's side;
And though it seemed to beat forever there,
No trace of wear it left upon the stone.

I raised my eyes, and saw far out beyond,
The flaming sky and angry waters met;
Fringed by dark crags, and jagged perilous rocks,
Which seemed to threaten e'en the dashing waves.

More fearful still, (about half way between
The red horizon and the castle wall,)
Two marble columns 'rose from out the sea;
Each one surmounted by a living lion,
With forepaw raised, as though to strike the prey.

* * * * * *

I knew not what to think of all I saw:
But soon there came a Presence to my side.
And it I questioned, saying, "knowest thou
The meaning of these things phenomenal?"

"Aye," said the Presence, "I am come to show
You things you could not see without my help.

"This castle on whose ramparts you now stand,
Is called the castle of Eternal Years.
These darkened waters, raging and alive,
Are called the Sea of Life. Look out beyond;
Behold how ships whose cargoes are of souls,
Come into sight, over the water's edge."

I looked and saw a few majestic ships,
Mount o'er the red horizon; all their sails
Wide flapping in the wind, were purest white.
Their decks were crowded with expectant souls,
Who sought to scan the wind-swept Sea of Life
Which lay before the vessels' plying prows.

And as I looked, I saw that some passed by
The cruel rocks, undamaged, and with hope.
But others struck, and struggling, sank beneath
The great dark waters of life's mysteries.

"And how is this," I cried, "That some so sink
On the bare border of Life's open Sea?"

The Presence answered, "Those blood-shedding rocks
Are all the elements opposing life.
Fear, sickness, poverty and hate, are they;
The inability to conquer death;
And that great curse of wealth which stamps out love."

And looking o'er the sea, again, I saw
Those ships which safely had defied the rocks,
Were stopped, and struggled near the two great lions.

Seeking to pass the pillars and the beasts.
Some passed, yet others sank, o'ercome and weak,
And disappeared beneath the raging sea.

Again the Presence thus interpreted:
"These lions are the evils of the world.
They stand with paw upraised, and seek to strike
Unhappy souls who travel where they rise.
And those they kill, who cannot pass them by.

"But those strong hearted souls, who passed the rocks,
And those who overcame the lions' power,
Will travel long, and finally gain with joy,
The happy Castle of Eternal Years."

* * * * * *

The Presence ceased to speak, and from my sight
This strange and unreal vision passed away.
I stood again within my own poor life,
A slave once more unto the commonplace.

And yet at times I see the great ships pass.
And sink and die, or live and struggle o'er
The waters of today's humanity.
I see the souls who battle with the lions;
And sometimes 'tis my happiness to see
A ship come into port, its journey done,
And find its rest within eternal life.

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Easter Reverie

Oh, Lord Thou hast taught us that life is immortal,
That Death is not known as the end of all things;
That the Soul in its freedom, soars past the tomb's portal,
And flies to its rest 'neath Thy sheltering wings.

Thou hast taught us, dear Christ, by Thy blest resurrection,
That a fair Life awaits us, to comfort our woe.
A Life which will realize our dreams of perfection,
Apart from the cares of the one we now know.

As Thy Passion was filled with the anguish and sorrow.
With which the earth's goblet of mis'ry o'erflows,
Thy victory proved that a blessed tomorrow
Awaits those who trust God, in spite of their woes.

* * * * * * * * * *

Let us praise Thee, oh Lord, on the Day of Thy power,
The Day Thou did'st open to Earth, Heaven's store.
And live but to praise Thee; until that glad hour,
When with Thee, in Heaven, we'll dwell evermore.

EASTER SUNDAY, 1913.

Death

Oh, Death, great wonderous Death,
A grim dark phantom men have pictured thee,
Yet kindlier thou seem'st to me,
A vapour flown, a passing breath.

Thou art not midnight's awful hour,
Which we so dread, and dreading, fear;
As bearing to another sphere,
A soul, thou art a gracious power.

Within thine arms, the desolate
Creep, finding in thy sheltering shades,
A peaceful joy which never fades,
A silent will apart from fate.

Thou liftest on thy soaring wings,
The souls of them that stretch out far
Their mortal hands to Heaven's star,
And dying, live for greater things.

We know our life so shallowly,
We have not learned to see that thou
Dost but promote the lives, which now
Know but a blind mortality.

NOVEMBER 24, 1912.

Les Pensées D'un Vieillard

We are born to the world, and inherit
Its fortunes of Passion and Fate;
But God grant we may live for the merit
Of our souls, 'though Death's coming be late.

And God grant, that when Earth reigns around us
With its lure of delirous life,
That His Angel of Peace may have found us
E're we fall 'neath the curse of Earth's strife.

I am old now, and fain would be preaching,
For I've seen through my long passing years,
Blind spirits who ever are reaching
For the jewels which become pearls of tears.

And I've seen, Oh, full many a mortal
Who as slave to the gifts of the world,
Has failed to behold Heaven's portal,
And against rocks of torture been hurled.

* * * * * *

But no, do not think I'd be saying,
Our thoughts should be only of Heaven;
We should love God and Earth in our praying,
And enjoy the good gifts each has given.

As I'm old, and I hear kind Death calling,
I am anxious to say e'er I go,
That the far greatest chance for our falling,
Is when only **one** vision we know.

To attain a good end worth the earning,
We must hold up Life's scale as we can;
And balance it well with our learning,
Of how to adore God and Man.

Echoes

Oh, my soul has often wandered
To a land of dim remembrance,
Where the sky is still and staring,
And the breeze is long forgotten;
Where the flowers bloom forever,
And the birds have lost their voices;
Where the rivers flow in silence,
In this dream-flown land of silence.

There my soul is torn and broken
With a wild grief which is silent,
And my thoughts cry out in anguish,
But my voice is flown and silent.
There the stillness and the flowers,
And the voiceless birds and rivers,
All unheard, are sobbing, sobbing,
With a grief which reigns forever.

And I often in my dreaming,
Linger by a stream of silver,
Bubbling o'er the forest's carpet
Like a host of glistening fairies;
And I sit beside its waters,
Lost in dreary trance-like musings,
Which are drenched in desolation
Of this land of unheard weeping.

Then I suddenly awaken
To my place in earth's existence,
Where one has no time for dreaming
But must work for preservation.
So I leave my unreal fancies
To the haunted land which holds them;
And resume my way of working
In the rut of reason's travel.

NOVEMBER, 1912.

Illusion

And what is as fair, in this world of care
(Where we are bound slaves to reality)
As illusion? * * * 'Tis sweet, with its gentle deceit,
And wraps our ideals in trancendency.

How gladly we let it make us forget
That the gossameer dreams, which we love in our youth,
Are blind and unreal; for the poet's ideal
Is a vision unswept by the searchlight of truth.

JANUARY 5, 1913

A Love Song

(DEDICATED TO GABY DESLYS)

Beautiful creature of my dreams,
On thy golden head there gleams
A glorious light, so soft, it seems
A radiance supernatural.
Beautiful angel Gabrielle!

'Neath penciled brows, thy lustrous eyes
Are full of laughing pained surprise
At thy misdeeds, thou would'st disguise,
From me who loves thee far too well.
Beautiful angel Gabrielle!

Ah, I would kiss thy glowing lips,
Much as the butterfly that dips
Into the crimson rose, and sips
The nectar from that source divine;
Then falls, o'ercome by joy and wine.

* * * * * *

'Though from thy charms, my great love came,
Yet from those charms I must refrain.
Give me a lily from thy name,
And free me from thy clinging spell.
Oh, lovely angel Gabrielle!

AUGUST 5, 1912.

The following poem is the supposed answer of one of the great artists of the Seventeenth Century, given upon being questioned by a friend, as to whether his artistic career has provided him with more pleasurable satisfaction, than would the successful filling of any other vocation.

I.

You ask me if unwont attraction lies
Within an artist's life or sculptor's work.
Well, it is very hard to tell, I think.
As every calling knows its recompense.

And we who stay cooped up within four walls
Most of the day, busied with paint and brush,
Or grind away at obstinate marble, find
A pleasure individual to us,
Which is not shared by those whose labour bids
Them to submit to open sun and rain,
Or toil beneath a drear monotony.

Still, such have joys the artist does not know,
And so I find that all things teach of life,
That every phase contains its own reward.

Perhaps that's why so many are content
To wait for circumstance to turn them out
A fixed work, for a late associate.

But I was born beneath such stars. combined
As fill the heart with love for some one thing.

So I have striven, fought unwaveringly,
Toward the one point where my ideal was fixed.

You question, have I now arrived at full
To taste the sweetness of assured success.
I do not know. The world has called me great,
And surely, satisfaction's found in that.
But as for joy of heart, I really think
That when I was a boy and drew at will,
Upon whatever came within my hands,
Or pinched a figure out of mud or clay,
I was as happy in the doing so,
As I am now, in working for the Duke.

For after all, Art, when it's in the soul,
Is never restful, never satisfied.
And though there's hidden honey for the taste,
When one surveys the beauty of one's work,
The bitterness that lingers in the sweet,
Is always found beneath the heart's first joy.

II.

We never gather knowledge in a leap;
But step by step, through slow and colourless toil.
Thus, when we reach a rich development
Of talent and of technique, and we find
That power in art, is ours, to own and use,
It all seems natural, and we feel no thrill
At th' finding of our capabilities.
For progress creeping on us, unawares,
Wipes out all seeming of a miracle.

And so I feel no different to-day,
Than when a boy, I worked as best I could.
Laughed for the pleasure of what gifts were mine.
Wept for my limitations and my youth.

Had I been able then, to lift the vail
That hung between that time of life and now,
Doubtless the sight of my perfected art,
(Viewed without the intervening years)
Would have struck my young heart dumb, with joy and awe,
As though I'd caught a sudden glimpse of Heaven.

But now that gradual development
Has brought me to the zenith of my dreams,
I can discover naught of wonder in it;
As the progressive opening of my eyes
Has shown me that one never knows enough
To blot out sight of what one doesn't know.

That's the chief hurt, I think, within all gain;
The restlessness that underlies success.

III.

If only in our souls, we might approve,
The things of our creation,—then let be—
Our satisfaction would be more complete.

But as it is, (I find both with myself,
And those related to me in pursuit.)
That learning is a thing which never stops
To settle into quiet at its goal.
For ever with each new attainèd end,
A wider, clearer vista opens up
Into the storehouse of the infinite.
And we, as though with newly given sight,
See that the end we sought, is incomplete.

IV.

Thus is it, I am wont to meditate,
Through the long hours that I spend at work.
And as I see forms rise beneath my hand,
All quickened and created by my skill,
My pleasure in achievement's end is marred
By the vision of an unrealized ideal.

And I am also conscious, that the soul
Within my art, is sleeping; nor will wake,
Until I gain that power to combine
In even compact, forces of mind and hand.

Until I can induce a higher sense
To join its value with what is attained,
And so bring forth a perfect work of art.

* * * * * *

But, should I die, before I realize
My ideal come to pass, I can but pray,
That somewhere in an unknown world to be,
God has ordained, that we may live again;
And in that future life pursue the work,
Which best delights our souls.

V.

Your questioning, about my chosen work,
Has led me to express myself, as best
I could, with unpremeditated words.
But surely, it were difficult for you
To gather meaning from these tangled thoughts.
And harder still, to grasp the scattered sense
Of my wand'ring logic. But I hope,
(That should you call to mind, aught I have said,)
You will realize that I am happier
Than if I were less earnest; and that Life
Is very loved by me. spite of its thrusts.

* * * * * *

Perhaps the incompleteness of our dreams,
Is the glory of existence on this earth * * *
Who can say? Life is too great to solve.
But in all our striving, be it what it may,
(Providing it is worthy) I would pray,
That God direct our eyes to Him throughout.

AUGUST 12, 1913.

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